

**Submission
No 53**

INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

Organisation: Ceramic Collectors Society

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Partially
Confidential

Attn; Hon Robert Borsak MLC and the General Purpose Standing Committee No.4 Inquiry into Museums and Galleries This is a submission by the Ceramic Collectors Society, Sydney I [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Vice-President of the CCS, am writing to your committee on behalf of our membership, specifically about the sale of the Powerhouse Museum/Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences site at Ultimo and the removal of the museum to a new site at Parramatta. We are a longstanding society, established in 1949, with close links to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences having held many seminars and our 50th anniversary exhibition at the museum. Our membership feels strongly that the proposed sale of the Ultimo site is not for the benefit of the people of NSW in any cultural sense, and while we do support the establishment of a new museum at Parramatta we do not feel that this is best served by removal of the main decorative arts museum from the group of cultural establishments within the CBD. These include the Australian Museum, The Art Gallery of NSW, The Museum of Sydney and the Museum of Contemporary Art amongst other smaller and more discrete establishments. We do not believe that the numerous overseas tourists who visit Sydney's museums, including MAAS, will make their way to Parramatta, nor will many of the people from the city and the eastern and northern parts of the city, who, after all, make up much of the museum's visiting public to date - unless there is a huge incentive to do so. Transport to Parramatta is not as easy as some politicians would like to think and real improvements may be years away. The proposed site itself is flood prone and looks to have even less display space than the current buildings in Ultimo. Is there truly enough money from the sale of the Ultimo site to build safely in terms of the collections themselves and to build a new museum at Parramatta that is a real improvement in terms of display, storage and access, physically and online? Considering that MAAS has too many items to display in the present building then a better way to improve access for more people, in Sydney and beyond, to see the wealth of items held in trust for the people of NSW would be to expand, even further, the visible storage facilities at the offsite display centre at Castle Hill, still more than the new areas which will be opening in September this year, as well as building a satellite museum at Parramatta. This would increase access to Sydney's museum collections both in terms of visitors from all over Sydney and NSW and increase the museums and galleries ability to display much more of their collections as a whole. Items could be revolved from one site to the other as appropriate. It would also be a great opportunity to build a truly 21st century exhibition space at the Parramatta site particularly for those 'blockbuster' style exhibitions which may be a bit cramped at Ultimo and other city venues, whilst freeing up display space at Ultimo and elsewhere to show more of their core collections. The exhibition space would also host exhibitions from the other museums in Sydney and NSW again giving greater access across many fields of interest and with regard to MAAS this would truly be a bonus for the many decorative art lovers like our members and those from other similar societies. We all look back fondly to the time when more ceramics and other decorative arts were displayed at Ultimo in a more permanent manner before these displays were removed to make space for touring exhibitions. Satellite museum spaces are a very good concept and have been successfully set up in the UK and USA. The Victoria and Albert Museum has the Bethnal Green Museum in London's east and now another in Dundee, Scotland whilst the Tate Gallery has Tate Britain and Tate Modern within London as well as their St Ives and Liverpool branches to the southwest and north respectively. The Metropolitan Museum in NY has just opened a new venue at the old Whitney space called The Met. Breuer and this is not to forget 'The Cloisters' which showcases their medieval collections on the upper part of Manhattan Island. A new museum is perhaps a more forward thinking idea which will really expand the cultural landscape of Sydney and give more opportunities to more people to see the rich heritage of NSW. It would obviously cost more but in the long run would surely have a better chance of good returns in terms of keeping the people, who are also voters, in all parts of Sydney happier and ensure an increase in visitor numbers and spenders in the museums themselves – to their exhibitions and in the museum shops, cafes, car parks and into the wider community. This would

give added access to the cultural heritage of NSW with three points of entry in the west, northwest and the city rather than a reduction in the access with the complete removal of MAAS from the Ultimo site. To summarise; our Society would like your Committee to seriously consider the following 1. Retention of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences at Ultimo 2. Establishment of a new Museum at the Parramatta site, so long as it is safe for the collections, showing items from MAAS and the other museums and galleries presently in the Sydney CBD plus an exciting and innovative 21st century exhibition space Thank you for considering our submission. The Ceramic Collectors Society looks forward to following this inquiry.